Do More Structured Physical Activity

Structured physical activities are scheduled or planned, like football practice, a basketball game or going to a fitness center or gym. These activities can include instruction, rules, goals or competition, and adding these elements can make you work harder, which leads to better health!

What about intensity?

Structured physical activities can have different intensities. Intensity means how hard your body is working when you do the activity. During a high-intensity activity, your heart beats faster, you breathe more quickly and you may sweat more. But listen to your body – when you're just starting out, even less intense activities can be hard work. If so, try doing it more slowly, or for less time.

Less intense activities

- Taking a family walk
- Dancing in your bedroom
- Riding your bike around your neighborhood
- Swimming with friends

More intense activities

- Walking or running in a race
- Dancing in a dance class
- Riding your bike with a team
- Swimming on a team

Why should we do more structured physical activity?

There are many benefits to increasing the amount of structured physical activities you do, like building and protecting healthy bones and muscles, increasing strength and helping to prevent weight gain. It also helps reduce the risk of developing diseases such as diabetes and heart disease, and can even improve medical problems like high blood pressure and high cholesterol. Some other potential benefits:

- May help school performance
- May help you feel more confident
- May improve feelings of sadness or depression
- May help you improve aerobic fitness and be active for a longer time

Increasing structured physical activity is a healthy choice for you and your family. Making a change to your habits doesn't have to be drastic. Start with a small goal and build on it to make it last!

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How Can We Do More Structured Physical Activity?

Doing more structured physical activity can help improve your family's health, but it can be hard to change your habits! Here are some tips to help get you started:

- Each family member should track his or her structured physical activity.
- Set a goal for yourself. Make sure it's reasonable and achievable. For example, if you go for a walk once a week, set a goal to do it three times a week.
- Get the whole family involved in some friendly competition. Supporting each other's efforts will make it easier for everyone to do well.
- Use the diary in this packet to record your goal and track your progress. Make copies of the diary before you start so you'll have one for every week.

Making it easier to do more structured physical activity
These ideas will help you stay focused and achieve your goals. The more you enjoy the activity you choose, the easier it will be to get more structured physical activity!

- Get started by making a family favorites list. What are your favorite structured physical activities, and what are some new activities you want to try?
- If you're starting a new physical activity program, talk with your doctor first. Also, start slowly and build on success by going longer or making it more intense.
- Do it together; plan family hikes on weekends or play a game of touch football.
- Join a local team or club; if the activity is nearby it will be easier to do regularly.
- Plan ahead. Come up with ideas for different seasons or rainy days.
- Explore new routes on your bike and remember to wear your helmet!
- Whatever activity you choose, remember to warm up before you start. Warming up can be stretching, walking or just starting the activity at a slow, relaxed speed.

Track your progress and reward your family for a job well done!
To start doing more structured physical activity, set your goal and go for it! Write your goal on the contract and use the diary to track your progress. Don't get discouraged if you don't meet your goal every day. Each day is a fresh start! Remember to reward yourself and your family for your efforts. Take a walk, play a game, read a book together. Celebrate your efforts and your success!